

A KNIGHT OF THE HIGHWAY

By CLINTON SCOLLARD.
Author of "A Man at Arms," "The Son of a Lady," etc.

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CHAPTER XIII.—CONTINUED.

After his plunge out of the bushes Rossiter hurried up the field, crossed into the upper orchard, and made his way to the sleeping quarters of the men. What he had just seen and heard had suddenly dissolved the resolution and purpose that had been daily taking firmer and more definite shape since he left the freight-train that night at Illica. Life never would, never could, hold aught for him. What he had recently experienced proved this but too plainly. He was a fool to think that he could ever be anything but a vagabond. He would take to the road again. He would put his few belongings together and stride to the door. There he paused. Should he leave without a word to any one? The love in his heart flooded over him like a great wave as his mind reverted to Miss Densmore. No, he would somehow contrive to send a goodbye to her. It was a crowning piece of folly, perhaps, but for it would mean nothing to her, but he would indulge in it nevertheless. It would be his final tribute to the now shattered altar of hope—the shrine which he had so unwittingly reared.

He remembered to have seen Joe Beacraft that morning slip a small pencil into a vest hanging upon a chair near his cot. The garment was still there. He took out his brother's letter, tore off at the crease a little strip upon which there was no writing, and in the dim light traced his words of adieu. He then replaced the pencil, thrust the folded message into his pocket, and reentered the room, scattering the fragments upon the grass as he stepped from the door.

"There's an end of that!" he said. In the hop-kiln, by dull lantern light, some of the pickers were having a last impromptu merry-making to the wheezy music of a mouth-organ played by one of their number. Among the dancers was Joe Beacraft. It had been Rossiter's intention to bid him good-by, but he saw that he could not do so without encountering many others, so with a consciousness of real regret he turned away. As he came to the end of the barn he described Jack Parmelee's familiar figure moving towards the house. Here was the very man for his purpose. He halted him.

"Mr. Parmelee!" he called. The farm manager halted. "Oh, it's you!" he said, as Rossiter drew near. "What's up?" He had remarked the pole-puller's bundle.

"I'm off," said Rossiter. "I've changed my mind about waiting till morning. If I hurry I think I can catch the Hintonville train, but I can't wait to say good-by to everyone. Won't you make my adieu to Mr. and Mrs. Merton and Miss Merton and to the Beacrafts—I'm very sorry not to see them all—and would you be kind enough to give this to Miss Densmore?"

He held out the slip of paper with its penciled words. Parmelee took it.

"Why, certainly, to be sure," he said. "But you'd better wait. Indeed, I wish you'd stay right on. We need just such a man as you. Mr. Merton'd give you good wages, you know."

"It's very kind of you, Mr. Merton spoke about it, but I must go," answered Rossiter, holding out his hand.

"Well, you'll come next year?" said Parmelee, giving him a hearty grip. "I'll keep a place for you, if you say so."

"I can't promise," Rossiter replied. "Thanks just the same."

Parmelee watched Rossiter stride out of the gate and take the Hintonville road.

"There's a chap I can't make out," he muttered as he walked towards the house.

Rossiter recalled that half way to Hintonville there was a highway branching towards the west. When he reached this he took it without hesitation. He did not intend of trying to catch the train, but had spoken of doing so as a plausible excuse for his hasty departure. Plans he had none, needed none. He was to drift again, a vagabond, a common vagabond. Now nothing mattered. Money he had, more than he had possessed that year, but of what special avail was it? In the life to which he was returning he could manage quite as easily without it. He trudged on steadily, his mind a babel of emotions. One by one he reviewed the scenes of his hop-yard life, in which Miss Densmore always appeared as the central figure, but chiefly he dwelt upon his return to consciousness after the encounter in the dip of the Blue Creek Road. It must have been pity not love that he had seen in Miss Densmore's eyes as she had bent above him. Yes, it must have been that, and yet the look haunted him, and continued to do so.

By and by he found himself nearing the valley of the Oskanonto. As he halted an instant before seeking the lower level, a fierce pulsating flame leaped up into the hollow of the night, and he knew that he was not far from the blast furnace of Harkana. Descending, he chose a road that led him past the flaring stacks, and paused to watch the fiery waves of molten iron pour into the moulds of sand. He crossed the furnace slag-heaps, hideous even in the starlight, and beyond the Oskanonto and the abandoned Susquehanna canal found a highway ascending into the hills. Whither it would lead he had no notion, and naught did he care. The hills appealed to him. He would go up among them as high as might be, and so he struck into this road.

For a time he ascended gradually, then it became stony and steep. Behind him, then, time to time, the stacks of the furnace shot streamers of red and blue and orange into the

night, illuminating briefly and weirdly the heaven and the earth. Occasionally a cloud would reflect the glow after the flame had died, a mock sunrise or sunset. Towards midnight, when he had won high among the uplands, the moon rose, a crumpling segment of pale gold.

Rossiter was now weary, and presently a straw-stack in a field adjoining the highway suggested a desirable place of rest. He stole the fence and approached the stack, becoming conscious, as he did so, of the sound of heavy breathing. Some one, it was evident, had already availed himself of a free night's lodging. Rossiter hesitated an instant and then went forward. Doubtless there would be plenty of accommodation for two. On the eastern side of the stack, revealed distinctly by the moonlight, was the huddled body of a man. There could be no harm, Rossiter thought, in having a closer glance at his fellow-lodger. He advanced cautiously a few paces and peered down, to start back in amazement and dismay, for he had gazed upon the repulsive face of "Whiskers."

Swiftly and silently he retraced his steps to the road, his mind swept by a powerful reaction. Voluntarily he had returned to the level of this detestable creature, had allowed the first disappointment to overthrow every firm resolve of the past weeks, and had gone miserably down once more into the very slough of degeneracy. Out of the realization of his instability, the overwhelming sense of his bitter shame, by some strange and sudden revulsion his spirit rose triumphant. He bowed his head.

"With God's help," he said, "it is the last time!"

He strode downward towards the valley, and a mile from the straw-stack found a sleeping place in a shed. Slumber soon brought its boon of forgetfulness, but before it did so he summoned from the depths of his recollection the lovely contour of Miss Densmore's face.

"After all," he thought, musing upon the sweetness of what might have been, "it is a blessing to have known her!"

When he roused the following morning the sun had scattered the banked mists above the hills beyond the Merton farm, and as he stood in the doorway of his rude shelter, blinking in the glistering light, a farmer approached driving market-wagon with a heaped wagon-load of potatoes. The two men exchanged glances and nods.

"Bound for Hintonville?" inquired Rossiter.

"Yep. That's where I'm goin'," was the reply.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind giving me a lift, then?"

"Mind? Certainly not! Jump right up!"

He checked his horses until Rossiter had mounted to the seat beside him. He was of a hearty, big-souled type; had a sandy beard, keen yet kindly blue eyes, and a voice that expanded into a muffled roar at the close of every sentence. His laugh, too, was explosive.

"Been hop-pickin', I s'pose, an' now startin' home?" he ventured.

"Yes," returned Rossiter. "Like it?"

"Yes, very much."

"Hain't heard, hev ye, what happened to a hop-picker, or a tramp, las' night up to Bob Pankhurst's on the hill?"

"Well, ye see Bob's got—er had, rather—a straw-stack jest across the road from his house that'd ketch the eye o' anybody strollin' by an' in want o' a place to stow 'emself till daylight free o' charge. They's plenty o' sech about these days—"

"This final remark with a sly glance at his companion.

The mention of the straw-stack had stimulated Rossiter's interest to such a degree that he did not heed the attendant pleasantries.

"Yes! yes!" he cried. "What happened?"

"Well," said the farmer, "when Bob got up this mornin' he was missin' a straw-stack. The blamed thing burnt in the night, and not a dern soul about the place seen it. When they discovered it, and come to go near to look at it, there was a man's boots stickin' out o' the black, smokin' mass. His upper part was done to a crisp."

"If I recall rightly," said Rossiter, conscious of a sudden awe in his tone which the other did not seem to notice, "there is but one straw-stack for some distance."

"Yep," said the farmer, "that's right! Bob's the only one for at least three miles, leastwise the only one near the road. The fellow, however he was, must 'ave been smokin' an' fallen asleep. He's had his las' smoke, that's dead sure, an' a mighty big one it was, by the look o' it."

Rossiter had no comment to make. The horror of the scene kindled in his imagination by the farmer's words silenced him. And yet he could but consider the dreadful doom which had overtaken "Whiskers" as retribution for his crime.

There was no one, he thought, who would question the justice of this tragic interposition of fate, but the shocking end of Hart Dawson was still heavy on his mind when, an hour later, he stepped upon the platform of the Hintonville station.

CHAPTER XIV.
COMMENCEMENT AT MONROE COLLEGE.

It was the evening of commencement day at Monroe college. Upon the wide veranda of one of the fraternity houses sat Philip Rossiter smoking a cigar and gazing through an opening in the trees at the moonlight-flooded valley. A very different man he was in thought and appearance from the individual who had strolled about the college campus that Sabbath morning more than a year and a half previous. The sky of fortune began to clear for him the day he became a member of the staff of the Evening Star, and there had been no recurrence of cloud. Early in his career upon the paper, in the absence of a more experienced reporter, he had interviewed a distinguished personage with unwonted tact, and in a leaped a bound into the graces of the editor-in-chief. Inspired by his success, he tried sketch writing, the

of effort in which he had formerly won praise. His vivid pictures of the slums, of tramp life, of unusual police court episodes, quickly attracted attention. From these sketches to fiction with a natural and easy transition, and he suddenly found himself a contributor to one of the best magazines.

Rossiter was again the neatly dressed man of yore, and to the ease of manner which had always been his was added a subtle trace of independence of assurance that was wholly new to him. He bore in his heart but one burden, his love for Sylvia Densmore, and yet he often confessed to himself that the memory of her wise personality carried with it more of sweetness than of sadness. Her image and the recollection of the hop-field days, more than the importuning of friends, had drawn him back to Hintonville and the reunion with his college classmates.

It was his first holiday since he had begun work upon the Evening Star, and it proved to him a time of restful delight—delight within whose translucent amber he was conscious of but a single flaw. Three of the four days for which he had been granted leave of absence had slipped by. Should he on the morrow drive over to the Merton farm and have a chat with the good people—Jack Parmelee and Mr. and Mrs. Merton and their daughter? Every night since his arrival in Hintonville he had put to himself this question, but the visit was yet to be made. Passionately as he longed for some news of Miss Densmore, he dreaded to hear of what he reflected must, in all probability, have long since taken place—her marriage.

For nearly an hour carriages had been passing, conveying students and young ladies and their chaperones to the gymnasium, where the senior ball was that night to be held. Rossiter's special friends were making calls in town, and within the fraternity house the under-classes were entertaining several prospective freshmen. Rossiter was hence left quite to himself, yet he was in no wise lonely, his thoughts being very agreeable company. Presently strains of music floated down to him across the campus. For a while he listened to them dreamily, then it occurred to him that it might be interesting to see what an up-to-date college ball was like, so he rose and sauntered towards the gymnasium.

As he emerged from the maple shadow, he found the combination of music and moonlight so beguiling

that he was in no hurry to venture farther, so he seated himself upon the steps of the chapel, which adjoined the gymnasium, directly beneath the symmetrical finger of the spire.

To the north he could mark the spasmodic twinkling of the electric towers of Illica, and there, in the vague purple distance to the south-east, lay the Merton farm.

His face was set in this direction when an unusually lively air from the orchestra stirred him from his reverie. With something like a sigh he turned towards the gymnasium, and was soon climbing to the third floor.

As he wheeled about to survey the room, on reaching the top stair, a gray spectacle met his eye. Great streamers of old gold and blue—the college colors—were festooned from beam to beam above the whirling dancers, and at intervals flags and trophies captured at intercollegiate meets were suspended. There was a general flutter of gauzy fabrics and a blending of talk and laughter that ever and anon surged above a dip in the music.

[To Be Continued.]

Choosing a Minister.

The parish clerk of Driedicht had been rather unfortunate in its ministers, two of them having gone off in decline within a twelvemonth of their appointment, and now, after hearing a number of candidates for the vacancy, the members were looking forward with keen interest to the meeting at which the election of the new minister was to take place, says the Scottish American.

"Well, Marget," asked one female parishioner of another as they foregathered on the road one day, "who are you gaun to vote for?"

"I'm just thinkin' I'll vote for none o' them. I'm no' muckle o' a judge, an' it'll be the safest plan," was Marget's sagacious reply.

"Toots, woman, if that's the way o't, vote wi' me."

"An' hoo are you gaun to vote?"

"I'm gaun to vote for the man that I think has the soundest lungs an' I'll no' bother us wi' deefin' again in a hurry!"—London Mail.

Didn't Specialize Too Much.

Youth is ambitious, but the average college professor, though not unduly cynical, has seen too much of the irony of life to keep from satirizing on the fact occasionally. A professor in a well-known law school the other day was warning a class in contracts against too much "specialization."

"I once had a student," he said, "who told me just after he was graduated that he intended to devote his attention almost exclusively to constitutional law. Last June he came back to commencement. It was eight years after he had taken his degree. I asked him how he was getting along. 'Fairly well,' he replied. 'I just adjourned my justice court to some down here to-day!'"

WILLING TO REPEAT.

Young Hunter Captures Something More Than Game On One of His Expeditions.

On the Kronprinz Wilhelm, one moonlight May night, a young man and a girl were discovered making love. The news of this discovery spread among the passengers, and many a joke was cracked, says the Kansas City Journal. But Senator N. B. Scott, of West Virginia, said in the smoking-room:

"There is nothing to laugh at here. In recent love-making is natural in the young. This fact was well brought out by an adventure that happened to a friend of mine, years ago, in the mountains of West Virginia."

"The young man was hunting. He came to a lonely cabin, and, being thirsty, he knocked down the door for a drink. The drink was handed to him by a girl so charming that, with a smile, he said:

"Would you be angry if I should offer you a dollar for a kiss?"

"No, sir," the girl answered, with a little blush.

"So my friend took the kiss, and then he gave the maiden the dollar. She balanced it in her hand a moment. She knitted her pretty brows in perplexity. 'What,' she asked, 'shall I do with this money?'"

"Why, anything you please, my dear," said my friend.

"She said," she murmured, "I think I'll give it back to you, and take another kiss."

America's Summer Resorts.

When it begins to get hot and dry one's thoughts naturally turn toward the lakes and rivers and to seashores of New York and New England, and we begin to wonder how much it would require of time and money to make the trip. A lot of these questions are answered and a lot of information given free in "Four-Track Series," No. 3, "America's Summer Resorts." Sent on receipt of a two-cent stamp, by George H. Daniels, General Passenger Agent, New York Central & Hudson River Railroad, Grand Central Station, New York.

Unintentional.

Toast Master (to chairman of public dinner)—Would you like to propose your toast now, my lord, or should we let 'em enjoy themselves a bit longer?—Lunch.

Don't Get Footsore Get Foot-Ease.

A wonderful powder that cures tired, hot, aching feet and makes new or tight shoes easy. Ask today for Allen's Foot-Ease. A sure cure, no rubbing. Trial package FREE. Address: A. S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

Mrs. Newlocks—"Why, those are genuine antique Mr. Newlocks'—Are they?"

They look to me like second-hand stuff.

To Cure a Cold in One Day.

Take Laxative Bromo Quinine Tablets. All druggists refund money if it fails to cure. 25c.

"It time was money," said Uncle Eben, "because if you don't stop busy men to tell 'em what they ought to be arrested for, they'll be arrested for being busy."

Piso's Cure cannot be too highly spoken of as a cough cure.—J. W. O'Brien, 332 Third Ave., N. Y. Minneapolis, Minn., Jan. 6, 1900.

The ignorance that is bliss is apt to be succeeded by knowledge that isn't.

The Four-Track News for July, best yet. Sold by newsdealers. Five cents a copy.

Never trust the man who will not trust another.—Ram's Horn.

Telling your troubles only enlarges them.—Chicago Daily News.

THE GENERAL MARKETS.

Kansas City, July 9.

CATTLE—Beef steers.....\$3.90 to \$4.10
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SHEEP—Wool and skins.....\$2.50 to \$3.00
WHEAT—No. 2.....\$1.75 to \$1.85
CORN—No. 2.....\$1.25 to \$1.35
OATS—No. 2.....\$1.00 to \$1.10
RYE.....\$1.50 to \$1.60
BUTTER—Fancy to extra.....\$1.60 to \$1.80
EGGS.....\$10.00 to \$11.00
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CORN—No. 2.....\$1.20 to \$1.30
OATS—No. 2.....\$1.00 to \$1.10
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BUTTER—Fancy to extra.....\$1.50 to \$1.70
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HOGS—Mixed and butchers.....\$4.20 to \$4.40
SHEEP—Wool and skins.....\$2.40 to \$2.90
WHEAT—No. 2.....\$1.70 to \$1.80
CORN—No. 2.....\$1.20 to \$1.30
OATS—No. 2.....\$1.00 to \$1.10
RYE.....\$1.40 to \$1.50
BUTTER—Fancy to extra.....\$1.50 to \$1.70
EGGS.....\$9.00 to \$10.00
POTATOES—New.....\$4.50 to \$5.50

NEW YORK.

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SHEEP—Wool and skins.....\$2.50 to \$3.00
WHEAT—No. 2.....\$1.80 to \$1.90
CORN—No. 2.....\$1.30 to \$1.40
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RYE.....\$1.60 to \$1.70
BUTTER—Fancy to extra.....\$1.70 to \$1.90
EGGS.....\$10.00 to \$11.00
POTATOES—New.....\$5.00 to \$6.00

The Chase.

"He used to kiss me every time we passed through a tunnel before our marriage," said the little woman, with sad reflections.

"And does he do so now?" asked the bosom friend.

"No, he takes a drink."—Chicago Daily News.

Beauty is not a gift, it is a loan that is taken back from its possessor, in spite of all protestations and struggles, gradually but surely.—Town Topics.

Some fellows marry poor girls to settle down, and others marry rich ones to settle up.—Philadelphia Record.

It's the people who doubt and become cured while they doubt who praise Doan's Pills the highest.

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Doan's Kidney Pills remove calculi and gravel. Relieve heart palpitation, sleeplessness, headache, nervousness, dizziness, etc.

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Her Preference.

"Shall I administer gas before extracting your tooth?" asked the dentist.

"Well," answered the fair patient from a back township, "it doesn't cost any more, I'd rather you'd give me electric light."—Chicago Daily News.

"Well, I never!" "What's the matter, my dear?" "Why, cook says that those people who live in that insignificant little house opposite came over here while we were away, and were photographed sitting on our veranda."—The House Beautiful.

Wise benevolence is always good business.—Ram's Horn.

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